

A broken collarbone (clavicle fracture)

Emergency department

Information for Patients

Produced: April 2026

Review: April 2029

Leaflet number: 1732 Version: 1

You have a fracture (break) to your collarbone which is called your clavicle. This injury happens from a direct blow or fall onto the area. This bone joins the breastbone to the shoulder joint.

How will my injury be managed?

Most clavicle fractures heal on their own. Most people are able to return to work and normal daily activities by six to twelve weeks, however, it may take several months for your symptoms to settle and for your shoulder movement to return to normal with some exercises. Exercise is important to prevent stiffness and aid recovery.

You will be sent a follow up appointment with the fracture clinic team, who will guide you through your future care and recovery.

Occasionally clavicle fractures may require surgery, if this is the case one of the orthopaedic team will talk you through the options, in an appointment, as there are risks with surgery (such as damage to other structures such as nerves, scarring, or long-term problems with the metalwork).

What will my arm look like?

It is normal to have bruising and swelling around the area, and maybe even a little lump over the site of the fracture. As the fracture heals the lump will go down but may always be noticeable. This will not affect the use of your arm when it has healed.

Sometimes this swelling can travel further down your arm due to gravity pulling it down. This likely to last for a few weeks.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals.
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

It is painful, is that normal?

This is a painful injury. You must take your pain relief regularly as advised by the clinician that saw you. Or you can visit www.yourhealth.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk/library and search for: 'Taking pain relief for an injury after discharge from the Emergency Department' or leaflet number 1238.

It is also normal for your arm to feel heavy, stiff, and uncomfortable in the beginning.

What can I do to help healing?

Applying ice can help. Wrap some ice in a tea towel to protect your skin and ice the injured shoulder for 10 to 15 minutes. Do this 3 to 4 times a day as needed to help reduce pain, swelling and inflammation.

Avoiding smoking as this can delay healing.

Scan the QR code or go to:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/nhs-stop-smoking-services-help-you-quit/>



Eat a well balanced diet as this can help with healing.

Scan the QR code or go to:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide/>



How should I have my sling positioned?

You should find a position that is most comfortable for you. It should be similar to the position on the picture. It is your choice if you wish to wear the sling at night.



How long should I wear my sling?

It is different for everyone. Everyone's recovery is different.

The sling gives comfort by supporting your arm. You should use your own levels of comfort to guide you when to reduce your sling use. You may be able to use pillows to rest your arm on while you are sitting, early on in your recovery.

Typically, most people reduce their sling use at 2 to 3 weeks and will have removed their sling totally by 4 weeks.

How do I take care of my arm?

- Wearing a sling can affect your balance. You may be at a higher risk of falling over. You must take care especially on the stairs.
- Do not wear any jewelry on the injured side (the arm in the sling) until the swelling has gone. The jewelry may get too tight and cause injury to the fingers or wrist.
- You may find it difficult to get comfortable in bed at night. Use plenty of pillows to support you to sit up. Or sleep in a chair. Do whatever you find most comfortable.
- It may be easier at the start to put your injured arm under your clothes instead of in the sleeve. Keep your sling on and put the clothes over the top.
- Wearing loose fitting clothing and front fastening tops can make it easier to dress and undress.
- You will need to remove your sling to wash.
- You will find it easier and less painful to undress your injured arm last and to dress the injured arm first.
- Avoid lifting or carrying on the injured side until you feel comfortable to, then build up slowly.
- Avoid sports. Do not do contact sports for at least 10 to 12 weeks from fracture.

Can I drive?

You should contact your insurance provider before driving. Your injury may affect your insurance. Once you are out of your sling, you must be able to safely do an emergency stop or manoeuvre. You should always be in full control of your vehicle comfortably.

Can I work?

This depends on what job you do. If the job is manual and needs you to drive you may need to take some time off. The doctors in fracture clinic or your G.P can give you a fit note if you did not get one from the emergency department.

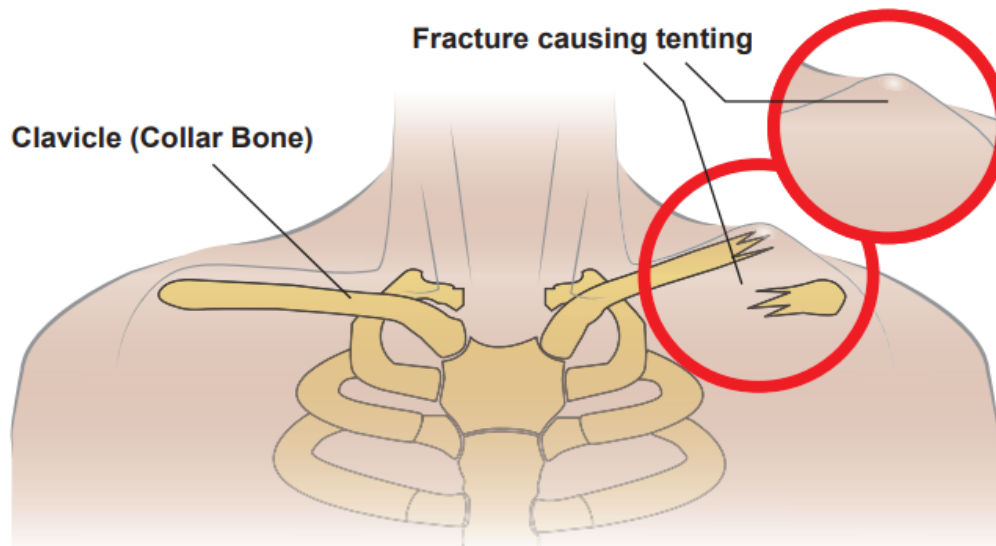
Things to look out for:

Bruising and swelling is expected. You may also feel some movement at the fracture site.

Contact the fracture clinic on 0116 258 5430 or attend the emergency department if the fracture clinic is closed, if you get any of the below symptoms:

- If you find you have numbness in the injured arm that is not going away with gentle movement.
- If you cannot move your wrist or elbow up and down.
- If your pain increases rather than getting better and pain relief is not helping.
- If you feel the fracture move and cannot control the pain after it has happened.

- You have skin tenting: This is where the skin over the fracture starts to become very pale, or the sharp ends of the bone become obvious. Please contact the fracture clinic, as this could be a sign of skin tenting which happens when the sharp ends of the bone are close to the skin's surface and could risk damaging the skin.



Exercises

While your clavicle is healing and your arm is resting in the sling, you must keep the joints and muscles moving around the injury. Movement reduces stiffness, improves circulation, reduces other muscle and joint pain, and may help you recover quicker.

These early exercises cover the first stages of your recovery and can be completed at home in a short amount of time with your sling off.

- Exercises should not be painful.
- At first repeat each exercise 5 times.

Assisted outwards movement

Cradle the injured arm near the elbow. Move it gently out to the side, and back again. You may need to move your supporting hand further away from the elbow as your movement improves.

General advice about these exercises:

- Try to repeat each movement 10 to 15 times. You can build up to this slowly.
- Repeat them again later in the day. We advise 3 to 5 times a day. Little and often is better.
- As you start to use your arm for longer periods you may feel some aching in the arm / shoulder.
- Try setting a reminder on your phone to remind you to complete your exercises.

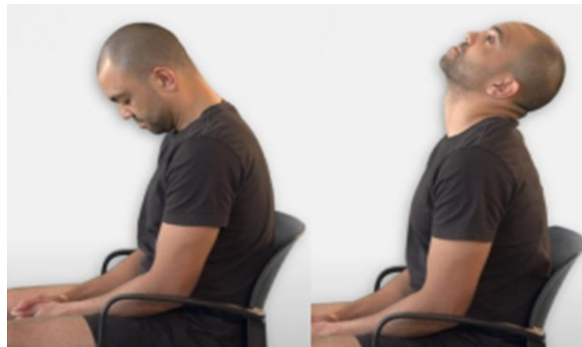
Posture Stretch

Sit up tall and straight. Gently tuck your chin in. Then relax back into your sitting position.



Neck Movements

Chin tilt: Move your chin towards your chest and hold it there for a moment. Then gently move your chin upwards tipping your head backwards. Then move your chin back to the starting position.



Ear to shoulder: Keeping shoulders relaxed and looking forwards, take one ear towards the same shoulder. Repeat on the other side.



Elbow movements

Bend and straighten the arm at the elbow. You may feel some tightness around the elbow as you do this. This is normal. Do not force the elbow. You can use your other arm to encourage this movement which may help at the start until you can move it on its own.

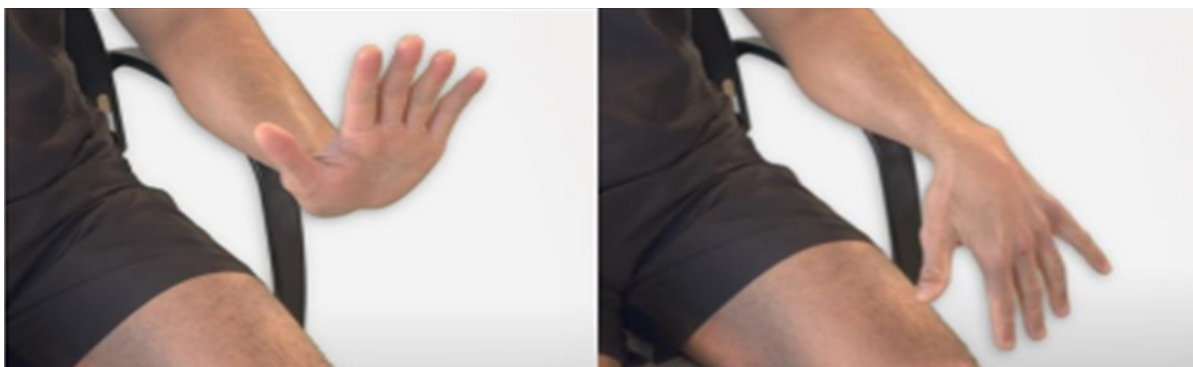


Hand, wrist, and fingers exercises

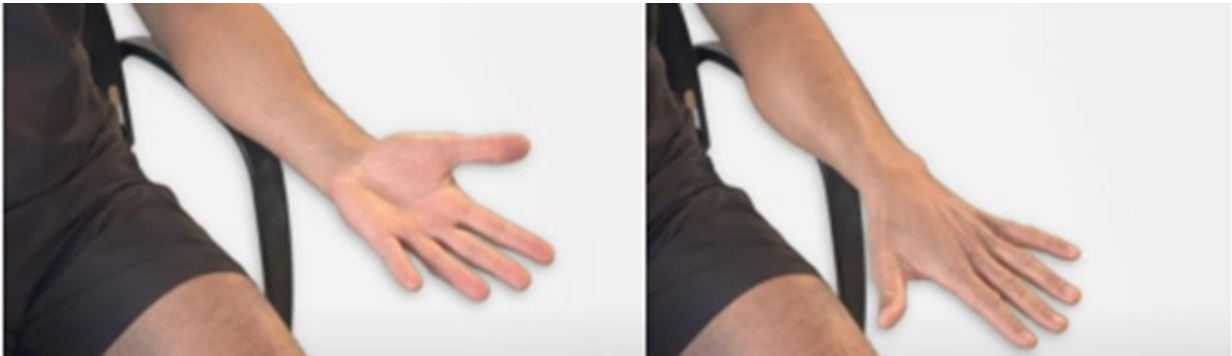
Start by opening and closing your hand to make a fist.



Move your wrist up and down.



Turn your palm up and down.



The following exercises are to start moving your affected shoulder. Start these when you feel comfortable to do so. This is often around 1 to 2 weeks after your injury.

Assisted forward movement

Use your uninjured arm to cradle and support the injured arm near the elbow. Start to slowly raise the arm up in front of you, and lower back down.



Assisted rotation

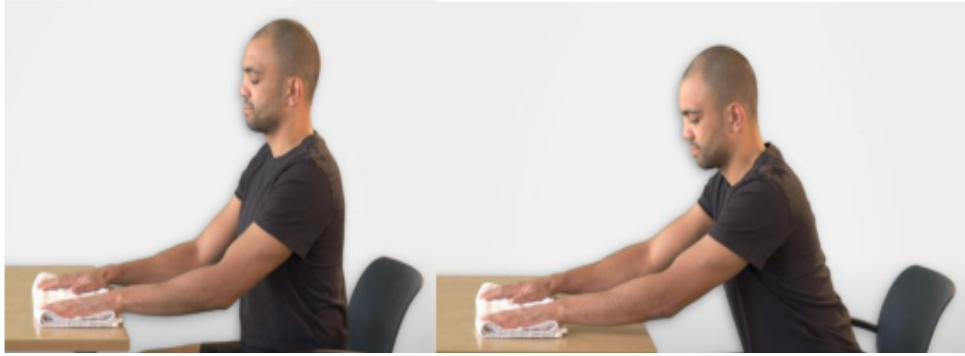
Hold the wrist of your injured arm that is bent at the elbow and crossed over your tummy (abdomen). Use the uninjured arm to gently rotate the arm out to the side keeping the elbow tucked into your side. And then return it back.





Table slides

With a table in front of you, rest your hands on a towel. Lean forwards so that your arms slide out in front of you. Then return to sit back upright and bring your arms back.



Contact details

Injuries Unit, Emergency Department, Leicester Royal Infirmary: **0116 258 5727**

Fracture clinic Leicester Royal Infirmary : **0116 258 5430**

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net